

INTERPERSONAL PERCEPTUAL CONGRUENCY AND  
COMMUNICATION IN THE MARITAL DYAD

By

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS . . . . .	ii
LIST OF TABLES. . . . .	v
ABSTRACT. . . . .	vii
INTRODUCTION. . . . .	1
CHAPTER	
I REVIEW OF LITERATURE. . . . .	3
Communication. . . . .	20
Summary. . . . .	24
II METHOD. . . . .	26
Phase I. . . . .	26
Subjects. . . . .	26
Procedure . . . . .	27
Materials . . . . .	27
Phase II . . . . .	30
Procedure . . . . .	30
Form. . . . .	32
Level . . . . .	34
Content . . . . .	35
III RESULTS . . . . .	37
Descriptive Statistics . . . . .	37
Demographic Data. . . . .	37
Interpersonal Checklist . . . . .	39

# TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

	<u>Page</u>
High Congruency vs. Low Congruency . . .	48
Demographic, ICL, MIC . . . . .	50
Hypothesis One. . . . .	57
Hypothesis Two. . . . .	57
Hypothesis Three. . . . .	59
Summary. . . . .	65
IV DISCUSSION. . . . .	66
Summary. . . . .	78
APPENDICES. . . . .	80
APPENDIX A INTERACTION PROCESS ANALYSIS CATEGORIES . . . . .	81
APPENDIX B DIFFERENTIATION OF STIMULI IN INTERPERSONAL PROCESSES: A SCALE FOR MEASUREMENT. . . . .	83
APPENDIX C INTERNALIZATION/EXTERNALIZATION IN INTERPERSONAL PROCESSES: A SCALE FOR MEASUREMENT. . . . .	87
APPENDIX D OWNING OF FEELINGS IN INTER- PERSONAL PROCESSES: A SCALE FOR MEASUREMENT. . . . .	89
APPENDIX E MARITAL INTERACTION CHECKLIST. . . . .	92
APPENDIX F TOPIC CONGRUITY AND DISCUSSIBILITY RATING FORMS . . . . .	101
REFERENCES. . . . .	106
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH . . . . .	111

# LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table</u>		<u>Page</u>
1	Descriptive Statistics for the Demographic Variables . . . . .	38
2	The Means for Each Factor on the ICL Under Each Condition--Actual Self, Ideal Self, Ideal Spouse, Actual Spouse and the Way Spouse Sees Me. . . . .	40
3	Intercorrelation Between Actual, Ideal and Meta Congruency . . . . .	41
4	The Mean Rank and Overall Rank of Various Areas of Concern. . . . .	43
5	Responses to Questions on What Would Provide the Greatest Happiness to Self and Spouse . . . . .	45
6	Responses to Questions on the Frequency Which the Most Desired Behavior is Emitted . . . . .	47
7	Frequency of Serious Conversations, Frequency of Arguments and How Long the Effect of the Argument Persisted in the Relationship . . . . .	49
8	The Mean Congruency Score for the HC and LC Groups at Each Level of Congruency. . . . .	51
9	Probability of Between Group Dif- ferences on the Demographic Variables . . .	52

# LIST OF TABLES (Continued)

<u>Table</u>		<u>Page</u>
10	The Probability of Differences Between the HC and LC Groups Means on the ICL at the Three Levels of Congruency (Actual, Ideal, Meta). . . . .	54
11	The Mean Content Score for the HC and LC Couples at Each Congruency Level . . . . .	58
12	The Mean IE, OF and DS Score for the HC and LC Couples at Each Congruency Level and the Significance Level of the Difference. . . . .	60
13	Summary Table of the Multivariate Analysis of Variance for the Bales Communication Categories at Each Congruency Level. . . . .	62
14	Summary Table of the Univariate Analysis of Variance for the Individual Com- munication Categories . . . . .	64

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INTERPERSONAL PERCEPTUAL CONGRUENCY AND  
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Forty happily married couples who had been married for an average of 10 years completed the Leary Interpersonal Checklist for (a) their ideal self, (b) their actual self, (c) their ideal spouse, (d) their actual spouse, and (e) the way they felt their spouse perceived them. The interpersonal perceptual congruency between the husbands and wives was computed at the Actual Congruency level, the Ideal Congruency level, and the Meta Congruency level. Each spouse completed a Marital Interaction Checklist designed by the investigator. Samples of the communication style used by each couple were obtained by having each couple discuss three marriage-related topics for a period of 30 minutes (10 minutes per topic.) These discussions were tape recorded and reduced to transcript form. Each transcript was rated by three trained raters using the Interaction Process Analysis system designed by Bales.

High congruity couples exhibited a more open and facilitative communication style than did the low congruity couples. They had a greater frequency of positive emotional responses to their partners and they were more likely to express their personal opinions and feelings than the low congruity couples. The low congruity couples exhibited a higher number of (a) requests for clarification, (b) attempts to act in a directive manner, (c) rejections of their partner, (d) antagonistic acts toward their partner, and (e) put downs directed toward their partner. High congruity couples were rated as being more open and aware of their feelings and the effect that they had on each other, than the low congruity couples. The high congruity couples were more at ease in the experimental situation and exhibited a greater degree of flexibility and variability in their communication style than did the low congruity couples. Congruency was shown to be a function of the amount of time the couple had lived together and was not related to maturation or education. A feedback process was hypothesized as the mechanism for developing congruency. There was, however, no significant difference in the degree of marital satisfaction reported by the high and low congruity couples.

Despite the differences reported between high and low



congruity couples, two important similarities were found across all the couples. These were (a) that virtually all of the individual spouses reported that their parents had been happily married, and (b) virtually every couple described their marriage as a partnership where the feelings and needs of each spouse were given equal priority. These two observations were felt to provide a clue to some of the elements that go to make up a happy stable marriage.

## INTRODUCTION

Few people would disagree with the statement that marriage is a complex affair. The statement may, in fact, seem blatantly obvious. A quick review of the literature, however, reveals that the preponderance of marital research is reductionistic. The researcher reduces the scope of his investigation so that it virtually denies the "obvious" opening statement. After 80 years of marital research we are virtually inundated with data. Almost everything about what Rogers (1972) calls the externals of marriage has been investigated. It is possible to examine the effect each partner's sex drive has upon the "happiness" of a marriage; what the individual sex habits are in marriages across diverse cultures; how the distribution of household duties effects a marriage; when couples marry, how they marry, how long they stay married and how many times they marry. The research may become more sophisticated and examine the personality attributes of each spouse and try to discern how a given profile effects the length of marriage, "marital satisfaction" or "marital happiness."

This type of research has provided us with valuable information that is essential for a full understanding of marriage. Regardless of the complexity of the research design or the concepts involved, such data are still external to the intimate relationship of marriage. It reduces marriage to the behavior of individuals, as individuals. Little room is left for interaction between these individuals. Indeed, except for the fact that they came to the research laboratory together and went home together, they might just as well not have been married! The crucial data, it seems to me, are not how each spouse reacts individually, but rather how they interact with each other in the intricate dyadic relationship we call marriage. The objective of this research is to capture in some small way this process of perception and interaction.

## CHAPTER I

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

One of the first objective studies of marriage and marital interaction was reported by Davis (1929). In the next few years pioneering research was done by Terman (1938) and Burgess and Cottrell (1939) who, along with the multitude that followed soon thereafter, were primarily concerned with finding correlates of marital happiness. The general research design was to evaluate specific attributes of each individual spouse and then correlate these attributes with the "happiness" of a given marriage. On the average, they reported a correlation of .5 with marital happiness.

Kelly (1941) was among the first to formally recognize that marriage involves not only the attributes of each spouse, but also the manner in which these attributes are viewed and interpreted by the other spouse. Along this line he wrote,

Thus it is conceivable that the actual relative amounts of intelligence or the actual relative positions of the husband and wife on a personality trait continuum are not as important in determining

compatibility as the belief of the husband and wife regarding their relative positions on these scales. (p. 193)

In the years following this postulation there was a burgeoning interest in the concept of interpersonal perception and marriage. Perception of the self and perception of others soon became a central construct in many important theories of personality and personality change (Rogers & Dymond, 1954). In simple terms, this theory stated that one's assessment and evaluation of another person and his behavior was based, not upon objective reality, but upon that individual's perceptions of the other. This theory was succinctly summarized by Rogers (1951): "The organism reacts to the field as it is experienced and perceived. This perceptual field is, for the individual, reality" (p. 484).

Additional steps in this direction were encouraged by the advent of systems theory. Application of this theory to the mental health field led researchers to view a family or a marriage as a system of interacting persons. This approach stressed that such systems must be studied as a whole, and that breaking such a system down into its various components would lead to an incomplete and inadequate understanding of the system. This idea has found contemporary support in the work of Laing, Phillipson and Lee (1966). They wrote,

In a science of persons, we state as axiomatic that:

1. behavior is a function of experience;
2. both the experience and behavior are always in relation to some one or something other than the self.  
(italics added, p. 12)

The role of perception in determining interpersonal behavior had become so acceptable that Laing et al. stated the hypothesis as axiomatic. Indeed, we can find the theory expounded in such an unlikely place as the comic page of our local newspaper. Consider the following taken from the cartoon Peanuts by Charles Schulz:

Lucy: Hey! look what I have! Could I interest you in a little "kicking off" practice? I'll hold the ball, Charlie Brown, and you come running up and kick it.

C.B. OK, it's a deal.  
HA! I know what she's got on her mind. Every year she pulls the same trick on me. . .she jerks the ball away just as I try to kick it. . . . Well this time I think she has a different idea. I think she is going to try to fool me by not jerking the ball away. This time she knows I know she knows that I know she knows I know what she is going to do. . . . I'm way ahead of her!!!!  
AUGH!!! WUMP!!!

Lucy: I figured you knew that I knew you knew that I knew that you knew I knew you knew, so I had to jerk it away.  
(quoted by Laing et al., 1966)

The "fact" that every reader knew that Lucy would jerk the ball away was immaterial. The significant fact was that Charlie Brown did not perceive the situation in that light. He was operating on his perception of Lucy and what he felt her perception of him to be.

Kelly (1941) investigated the relationship between personality attributes and marital "happiness." Each spouse was administered the Personality Rating Scale and, in line with his idea of interpersonal perception found above, rated both himself and his or her spouse. Kelly concluded that,

For the present we can only conclude that the personal satisfaction which a husband or wife experiences in his marriage relationship is significantly related both to his feelings of self-regard and to his judgement of the superiority or inferiority of his own personality in comparison to that of his spouse. (p. 198)

Building upon this seminal research, Rosalind Dymond (1954) approached the problem in a slightly different manner. She was interested in both the similarity of the couples' self concepts and the degree to which this similarity is real (i.e., true in the sense that objective ratings of each spouse are similar) or assumed (i.e., true because the individual spouses perceive each other similarly regardless of the objective facts). Each spouse was administered a

true-false questionnaire constructed from 115 MMPI items. The questionnaire was administered under two conditions. In the first condition the spouse was to provide their own answers and in the second condition the spouse was asked to predict his or her spouse's responses to the same items. Using this data Dymond computed three scores: accuracy (the degree to which one of the spouse's responses matched the responses predicted by the other spouse); similarity (the degree of correspondence between each spouse's self ratings); and assumed similarity (the degree of correspondence between one spouse's responses and that same spouse's prediction of the other spouse's responses). The results indicated that the happier couples had greater accuracy scores and greater similarity scores than unhappily married couples. No correspondence was found between assumed similarity and the degree of marital happiness. In conclusion Dymond stated,

The findings on this small group of married couples appear to confirm the general hypothesis that happiness of a marriage is related to the partners' understanding of one another, as reflected in their ability to predict each others' responses to a series of items on a personality inventory. In other words, married love is not blind, and ignorance is not connubial bliss. The better each partner understands the other's perceptions of himself and his world, the more satisfactory the relationship. (p. 170)



The fashion in which Dymond assessed marital happiness .  
was unique and somewhat questionable. She described her  
procedure as follows:

To provide the happiness criterion, each member of the couple was asked to list independently the names of 10 married couples well known to him and his spouse. He was then asked to rank these from 1 to 10, according to his judgment of the happiness of their marriage. Next he was asked to name the couple whose marriage his own most closely resembled. His ranking of this couple was then taken as his ranking of his own marriage. The couples in the sample were also ranked by the experimenter, who knew each couple personally. . . .The group was then divided into eight "happy" couples (who picked as most resembling their own marriage, one they had ranked between 1 and 3) and seven "unhappy couples" (ranked 4 to 10).  
(pp. 165-166)

We must certainly question the adequacy of such a ranking procedure. A methodological weakness of this nature, involving as it does the reliability and usefulness of the criterion variable, limits the generality of her results.

Corsini's (1965a, 1956b) research allowed further generalizations. In this study 20 couples from the University of Chicago were given a test battery that included measures designed to tap marital happiness and estimates of the perception of the self and of the spouse as well as predictions of the mate's self and the mate's other. In a

much needed control procedure, Corsini drew random samples of non-spouses and compared the spouse intercorrelations with this random sample (i.e., not against chance). In summarizing his results he listed the following conclusions:

1. There is no evidence that marital happiness is a function of understanding of the mate.
2. There is no evidence that marital happiness is a function of similarity of the selves of the mate.
3. The evidence indicates that marital happiness is associated with similarity of self-perceptions of the mates.
4. Husbands and wives are no more similar in their self-perceptions than randomly paired men and women.
5. Marital happiness is related to the conformity of men to self-perceptions of their sex. This relationship does not hold for women. (1956b, p. 330)

The fifth finding listed above is particularly intriguing.

In essence this would seem to mean that the congruence between the husbands self and some "socially sanctioned ideal male self," as well as the congruence between the wife's prediction of her husband's self and this same ideal male self is of primary importance in determining marital happiness. The data did not support the same kind of finding for the wife.

Luckey (1959, 1960a, 1960b, 1960c, 1961, 1964) conducted

an extensive and careful analysis of the issue of congruence between interpersonal perceptions and marital happiness. Like other researchers, her subject pool contained only married students. These couples were first administered the Locke and Terman scales of Marital Happiness. Based on this scale Luckey selected eighty-one couples who exhibited Happiness scores that were either highly positive or highly negative. Each couple from these highly differentiated groups was administered the Leary Interpersonal Check List for (a) self, (b) spouse, (c) ideal self, (d) mother, and (e) father. It is important to note that the ratings of one spouse by the other spouse did not involve prediction of the others' responses. The individual was asked to rate the spouse as he (or she) perceived that spouse. Luckey's concern was in evaluating "the degree of congruence of perception and its association with marital satisfaction" (p. 54, 1960a). The data allowed the following conclusions to be made:

1. Satisfaction in marriage is related to the congruence of the husband's self concept and that held of him by his wife.
2. Happiness is related to the congruence of the husband's self and his ideal self.
3. Happiness is related to the congruence of the husband's self concept and his rating of his father.

4. Happiness is related to the congruence between the wives' concepts of their husbands and their concepts of their fathers.
5. The congruence between the self and the ideal self was greater among the happy couples for both the husbands and the wives.

It is interesting to note that virtually every conclusion utilized the male figure (either the husband or the father) as the perceptual target and therefore supports Corsini's earlier findings.

In her concluding remarks to the 1961 report, Luckey offered the following summary statement:

These findings suggest that certain perceptual congruencies and dimensions on which the perceptions are congruent are related to the degree of satisfaction the subjects find in marriage. The importance of perceptual congruency and marital satisfaction seems related in some cases to the sex of the subject. (p. 249)

Unfortunately, the validity of her conclusions is questionable because the scoring procedure that was utilized did not follow the methods presented by Leary.

In one study (1961) Luckey converted the multiple ICL scores to a single quadrant score. Congruency was then defined as scores falling in the same quadrant. The original scoring procedure (Leary, 1957) yielded eight octant scores. If the researcher was willing to lose some of the power of

his data these eight scores could be converted mathematically into scores representing the dimensions of love vs. hate and dominance vs. submission. Luckey, however, plotted these two points in the circumplex and then used the quadrant in which the point fell as the only data. It should be noted that by chance alone one would expect two scores to fall in the same quadrant 25 per cent of the time. In another study (1960) Luckey computed the eight octant scores, but in so doing violated the very structure of the ICL as outlined by Leary. Each octant was constructed with items weighted according to their relative strength on that particular dimension. For example, a statement such as "able to doubt others" was given a weight of one while a statement such as "distrusts everybody" was given a weight of four. Luckey, however, gave each statement equal weight and simply counted the number of statements endorsed by a given individual along each dimension and used that count as the score. Such a procedure clearly violated the very nature of the check-list. In still another study (1964), Luckey recognized both the need to use the original weighting as well as the need to at least recognize the existence of octant scores. Once again, however, there was a questionable scoring procedure. In this case Luckey combined items of equal weight but then

scored a one if the individual endorsed only one of the two items and a two if the individual endorsed both of the items. The score then became the sum of these endorsements for each octant. Having selected and combined items of equal weight, Luckey then treated the pairs as if they were equally weighted (thus a combination of items with an initial weight of one was treated the same as the pair of items weighted four). Luckey offers little or no rationale for this procedure.

The studies discussed above were selected as representative of a larger body of research. The finding of other researchers support the notion that there is an association between marital happiness, success, and adjustment with perceived similarity (Dymond, 1954; Kotlar, 1965), self-acceptance (Eastman, 1958), perceived role compatibility (Kotlar, 1965; Luckey, 1960a), actual similarity (Corsini, 1956a; Dymond, 1954; Hurley & Silvert, 1966), accuracy in predicting partners' response (Corsini, 1956; Dymond, 1954; Stuckert, 1963; Taylor, 1967), and actual compatibility (Kotlar, 1965; Luckey, 1960b; Preston et al., 1952). Each of the above studies has provided us with significant information. Some of the studies have unique limitations (i.e., the questionable scoring procedures in the Luckey research)

while others share a common weakness--that of a questionable criterion variable.

The most significant limitation that is found across all of these studies is the use of "marital success" and "marital happiness" as criterion measures. The use of such concepts involves two major assumptions. First, the user must assume that the concept is meaningful and that it can legitimately be applied to marriage. Second, the researcher must be willing to accept the validity of his measures of happiness and/or success. It must be explicitly recognized that these are two separate questions. A researcher may develop a measure of happiness with statistical significance and predictive validity. If, however, it is later decided that the concept of happiness cannot legitimately be applied to marriage, the instrument must be discarded (at least as a tool in marital research).

Our primary concern with the use of marital happiness as a criterion measure is whether it can be legitimately applied to a marital dyad. Rossi (1965) has pointed out that happiness is a highly personal and unique feeling. In general, happiness is a highly pleasant state of a given individual with reference to some other state or level of happiness. When a person is happy he seems to be receiving

more pleasure than usual from the situation in which he finds himself. Once a person becomes used to a given level of happiness, however, he may well experience a decrease in happiness. If the base state of happiness (for a given situation, i.e., marriage) could be established then it might be possible to measure the degree to which a given individual deviates from his base line level. Without this base line we are forced to accept the assumption that happiness is the same experience for each person and that what would make one person happy would also make another person happy. Up to this point our behavioral and assessment technology is not advanced enough to give us this kind of base line for happiness.

Schvaneveldt (1966) has pointed out the highly subjective and often unconscious nature of happiness. He notes that happiness has varied sources. If at a given moment in time an individual is happy, is it because he just got a hole-in-one on the golf course or because his interaction with his wife is a happy one? Such events (i.e., the hole-in-one) may increase the individual's level of happiness and this increase may generalize to many other aspects of the person's life. The person may be "on top of the world"; but to assume that this somehow necessarily reflects the



nature of that person's marriage would be foolhardy. The clinician is familiar with the "neurotic" marriage in which one or both of the partners professes a high degree of happiness in a situation friends, neighbors, and the clinician see as unhealthy. Each individual may satisfy his own needs in the marriage with little regard to how functional the marriage actually is. Should the researcher categorize that "happy" marriage in the same way as the "healthy" happy marriage? I think not.

The use of the concept of marital happiness as a criterion measure is hampered by the lack of a baseline of happiness, the very personal nature of the phenomenology, the degree to which happiness may generalize from one situation to another and the possible effect of unconscious motivation that may lead the partners to label a marriage as happy while it is actually "neurotic." The use of such a variable in marital research must be considered a highly questionable procedure.

The term "marital success" is equally questionable. The usefulness of this term rests fully on the establishment of objective criteria for success. But, what factors are indicative of success? Traditionally, researchers have used such factors as length of marriage, number of children,

number of separations, the sharing of a residence, the possession of material goods or even the rearing of attractive children as criterion for success. Some of these factors are easily measured (i.e., length of marriage) while others (such as the rearing of attractive children) can be assessed with little accuracy. In any case the terms are highly culturally determined and involve a complex interaction of other factors such as intelligence, social classes, educational level, etc. In our complex society how can such factors be assumed to indicate success in any particular marriage? Any person who has had any prolonged contact with married people has met couples who should not be married. But, for some reason or another (i.e., the children, money, their parents, the church) they stay married. Should that marriage be considered successful and categorized along with other "successful" marriages? I think not.

The validity of experimental measures of marital happiness, marital success and marital adjustment is a separate issue. Paper and pencil tests of marital happiness, marital success and marital adjustment have been the subject of a considerable controversy. One of the earliest criticisms of such protocols has been offered by Winch et al. (1955). They noted that some of these paper and

pencil tests (i.e., the Burgess and Cottrell) obtained a correlation of .88 between scores from husbands and wives. Terman (1938), when controlling for collaboration, obtained a correlation of only .59. Winch took this as an indication that the Burgess and Cottrell data were contaminated through collaboration between subjects, and thus the adjustment rating biased.

Another major concern has been posited by Waller and Hill (1951). They observed that most of the tests designed to measure concepts such as adjustment and happiness were primarily constructed of items that tended to reflect American middle class values. Thus, they suggested that the adjustment or happiness score produced by the test may actually measure the degree to which a given marriage conforms to the socially sanctioned pattern. Couples who do not score high on these measures may, in fact, only be indicating that they do not agree with the middle class norms for marriage. Edwards (1957), Ellis (1948) and Hawkins (1966) have noted that social desirability may significantly effect such paper and pencil scores. They noted, for example, that divorced (and therefore unsuccessful) couples could be expected to exhibit a greater facility to express their lack of adjustment or happiness than would non-divorced and non-separated couples even if

the actual level of adjustment was the same. Having "admitted" their lack of adjustment publicly (by divorce), they should experience little difficulty acknowledging this fact on a paper and pencil inventory. Hawkins reported a correlation of from .31 to .37 between the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale and the scores on the Locke-Wallace scale.

Another major criticism alluded to earlier is that there is a growing awareness that marriage is more than the individuals that make it up. If this is true, assessments of marital happiness and marital success should be made from both the husband and the wife together. The paper and pencil procedures used in the research discussed above yielded independent measures from each spouse.

The concepts of marital happiness and marital success have been routinely applied to marital research. Indeed, it might be stated that such measures have provided the very foundation upon which marital research has been built. The discussion above has pointed out theoretical, phenomenological and empirical data that strongly suggests that the use of such criterion measure is unwarranted and misleading.

Interestingly, Corsini (1956) has earlier stated:

It may be postulated that satisfaction in marriage is a function of the behavioral

interactions of couples which is in turn determined by social perceptions. (p. 327)

Unfortunately, Corsini went on to use marital happiness and not behavior as his criterion measure.

Since interpersonal communication is clearly one form of interactive behavior, it is ideally suited for use in marital research. Unlike the rather vague concepts of happiness and satisfaction, it is quantifiable. It can be recorded at any moment in time, and it preserves the interactive nature of the relationship far better than static paper and pencil tests. In light of the numerous research studies reported below, it might be possible to think of communication as an operational manifestation of marital happiness and satisfaction.

### Communication

Perhaps the most significant difference between man and other animals is that he can communicate through consensually validated symbols (speech). It should not be surprising, therefore, to find that marital research has indicated that the quality of marital communication forms an important aspect of marriage (Ard & Ard, 1969; Hinkle & Moore, 1971; Miller & Nunnally [cited by Van Zoost, 1973];

Navan, 1967; Rutledge, 1968). Indeed, Raush et al. (1963) have reported that the establishment of good communication is among the most important tasks facing the newly married couple. This finding is supported by Rogers (1972) who, in his highly sensitive study of marriage, postulated that communication is one of four primary factors necessary for an enriched marriage.

This hypothesis (that "good" communication is necessary for a "good" marriage) often receives clinical support based on studies of patients in therapy or couples in marriage counseling. Speers (1964) noted that one of the primary difficulties among the couples he was counseling was that one spouse was incorrectly assuming either that they understand their spouse's needs or that their spouse understood their needs. Pierce (1973) has written that "a central problem plaguing a great many couples who enter marriage counseling is a poor level of interpersonal communication." This experience is expressed in the common refrain of "he (she) doesn't understand me." Pierce (1973) and Schauble (1973) have recently offered data that indicate that the level of inter-spousal communication increases as therapy progresses. The more functional a marriage the higher this level becomes. This postulate is further supported by the

finding that learning communication skills often leads to a marked decrease in marital difficulties. Indeed, communication skills training is an integral part of many marriage therapies. Current research indicates that this training procedure is remarkably successful (see for example Alger & Hogan, 1967; Clarke, 1970; Knox, 1971; Paul, 1966; Perlmutter et al., 1967; Pierce, 1973; Van Zoost, 1973).

Although a complete analysis and definition of communication is beyond the scope of this paper, a brief note needs to be made of some current concepts of dyadic communication as they apply to marriage. Communication is an overriding term which has been defined in a variety of ways. Some investigators (i.e., Watzlawick et al., 1967) have equated communication with behavior and stated that "one cannot not communicate."

Unfortunately, as noted above, marital problems are often the result of an inaccurate perception that the meanings are shared when, in fact, they are not. To others communication has been defined in operational terms involving sentence length, who speaks to whom, what verbs they use, etc. Satir (1967) has postulated that communication involves two components: the content message and the relationship message.

Combining these findings I would postulate that communication involves content (as postulated by Satir), form (a recognition of the semantic quality of language), and what I have tentatively called level (a concept of relationship). Perhaps the following example quoted from Schauble (1973) would best illustrate this point.

Consider the case in which a husband will approach a counselor or therapist requesting therapy to deal with the hostility and conflict that he is experiencing in his marriage; upon hearing a statement to this effect to the helper, the wife flies into a prolonged and agonized rage (or depression) because "there is nothing wrong with our marriage, how can you say we fight. . . you son-of-a-bitch!" (p. 71)

In terms of content the husband is talking about hostility and anger while the wife is denying that such a content actually exists. Although we do not have the language of the husband's original statement, it would seem acceptable to postulate that the statement was of the form which Bales (1950) has labeled as "gives opinion, evaluation, analysis, expresses feeling or wish" while the form of the wife's response would be labeled "shows antagonism, deflates other status, defends or asserts self." The level of the husband's communication (along the Owning of Feelings dimension) would probably have been at Level II or Level III while the level of the wife's communication would be at



Level I. I would postulate that each of the components of communication-content, form and level, offers significant insight into the communication pattern between husband and wife.

### Summary

We have considered the significance of interpersonal perceptual congruency and communication within the context of the marital dyad. We have noted the general weakness of using marital happiness or satisfaction as a criterion variable and have suggested that marital communication provides a more precise tool for the evaluation and analysis of marital interaction. We have postulated that two important aspects of marital communication are form (how you say what you say) and level (the quality of relationship and empathy expressed in communication). This project was designed to investigate the relationship between interpersonal perceptual congruency and (a) the form of communication used by the couple, (b) the level of communication among married couples, and (c) their reactions to various content areas. The following hypotheses were investigated:

1. HC and LC couples will exhibit different reactions to various content areas (areas for possible discussion).

2. LC and HC couples will exhibit different levels of communication.
3. Low Congruity (LC and High Congruity (HC) couples will exhibit different patterns of communication form.

## CHAPTER II

### METHOD

This research was conducted in two phases. In Phase I each subject couple completed five Interpersonal Checklists (Leary, 1957) and a Marriage Interaction Checklist designed by the investigator. Phase II involved an interview with the investigator and the tape recording of three 10-minute discussions between each couple. These phases are outlined in detail below.

#### Phase I

##### Subjects

The potential subject pool consisted of all married couples living in and around Gainesville, Florida who had been married for three years or more and who considered themselves "happily" married. Couples were solicited by (a) posting notices describing the research, (b) placing notices in the University of Florida Married Student Newsletter, (c) contacting various church groups, and (d) word of mouth.

### Procedure

The initial contact with most potential subjects took place over the phone. At this point a full description of the research was given and the various tasks required of each couple were outlined. If the couple committed themselves to take part in the research, the investigator arranged to meet with them in the near future. At the appointment the research was described in more detail and the materials that made up Phase I were presented and the directions for completing them were given. After all questions were answered, the couple was instructed to contact the investigator as soon as they had completed the Phase I materials.

### Materials

Each spouse was administered the Leary Interpersonal Checklist (Leary, 1957) under the following five conditions: (a) the way they actually perceived themselves at that point in time, (b) the way they would ideally like to be, (c) the way they actually perceived their spouse to be at that point in time, (d) the way they would ideally like their spouse to be, and (e) the way they thought their spouse saw them at that point in time.

The Interpersonal Checklist (ICL) is a list of 128 descriptive behavioral items selected to represent eight areas of interpersonal behavior, each of the eight areas is made up of 16 items. The eight scales are: (a) managerial/autocratic, (b) responsible/hypernormal, (c) cooperative/overconventional, (d) docile/dependent, (e) masochistic/self-effacing, (f) rebellious/distrustful, (g) aggressive/sadistic, and (h) competitive/narcissistic. The average test retest reliability of the ICL has been reported by Leary to range from +.75 to +.83. The level of measurement employed in this study was described by Leary as "Level II, Conscious Description." The only criterion for determining Level II data is the conscious verbal report (or in the case of the ICL a written report) of the individual. The ICL provided an organized way to record how the person perceived himself and his spouse. When utilized as a classification scheme, the ICL may be considered a valid expression of the manner in which an individual feels he presents himself and the way in which the individual perceives another person (in this case the spouse).

The ICL was scored as described by Leary (1957), yielding an eight score profile for each condition (actual self, ideal self, actual spouse, ideal spouse, and how I think

my spouse sees me). Since both the husband and the wife completed these materials, a three-letter coding system was developed in order to facilitate discussion of the individual profiles. The first letter of the code indicates which spouse, husband (H) or wife (W), completed the ICL. The second and third letters indicate what the perceptual target was in the particular case involved. Ideal self is abbreviated IS, actual self is abbreviated AS, ideal husband and ideal wife are abbreviated IH and IW, respectively. Actual husband and Actual wife are abbreviated AH and AW, respectively. In the Meta condition (how I think my spouse sees me) the code is altered slightly. The code HWH indicates the husband (H) is describing the way he thinks his wife (W) perceives him (H). The parallel code for the wife is WHW.

The ten profiles generated by each couple were then compared in order to determine the degree of congruency between the perceptions of the husband and those of the wife. The computations were completed as follows:

$$\text{Actual Congruency} = \text{HAS} - \text{WAH} + \text{WAS} - \text{HAW} \quad (1)$$

$$\text{Ideal Congruency} = \text{HIS} - \text{WIH} + \text{WIS} - \text{HIW} \quad (2)$$

$$\text{Meta Congruency} = \text{HWH} - \text{WAH} + \text{WHW} - \text{HAW} \quad (3)$$

In addition to completing the ICL each spouse completed

the Marital Interaction Checklist (MIC). The MIC was composed of 27 items constructed by the researcher and 14 items taken from the Bienvenu Marital Communication Inventory (Bienvenu, 1970). A copy of the MIC can be found in Appendix E.

## Phase II

### Procedure

Couples contacted the investigator when Phase I materials had been completed. A second appointment, lasting approximately two and one-half hours, was set up between the investigator and the couple. The first part of this interview was designed to allow the investigator to get more information on the responses the couple had made to the ICL and the MIC and to allow the couple to raise any questions that came out of these instruments. An attempt was also made to find out if any important area of their relationship had not been mentioned on the ICL or MIC. The second part of this appointment involved obtaining a sample of the couples' communication style. Prior to obtaining this sample each spouse was given a list of 11 potential discussion topics (see Appendix F) and asked to rank order the

topics in the order in which he or she would like to discuss them. The topic which they would most like to discuss was given a rank of 1 and the topic that they would least like to discuss was given a rank of 11. Each spouse was then asked to indicate along a seven-point scale the "discussability" of each topic. A topic which the spouse felt could be easily and openly discussed was given a rating of 1 while a topic that would be very difficult to discuss was given a rating of 7. The investigator then computed the topic congruity score (TC), which was operationally defined as the absolute value of the difference between the rankings of each topic. A high TC topic (operationally defined as the topic with the smallest TC score), a low TC topic (operationally defined as the topic with the greatest TC score) and a middle TC topic (operationally defined as the topic whose TC score fell approximately half way between the high and low TC topics), were then selected for each couple. These three topics were presented to the couple in a randomized order with the following instructions:

I am now going to give you several topics which I want you to discuss with your spouse. I am particularly interested in having you explore your feelings about each topic as well as helping your spouse to explore his or her feelings. You will have 10 minutes to



discuss each topic. Are there any questions? (If so, they are answered). OK, here are the topics I want you to discuss.

The couple was then given three 3 x 5 index cards, each card containing one of the topics selected for discussion. The couple was instructed to begin with the topic described on card one and then to proceed to cards two and three in that order. After completing the third topic a debriefing was held and any remaining questions that the couple had were answered. The couple was then thanked for their time and energy and dismissed. Each of the three discussions was tape recorded. The tape was then reduced to transcript form and all identifying information was removed in order to protect the confidentiality of the couples.

#### Form

The form of communication adopted by each couple was assessed by rating each discussion according to Bales' Interaction Process Analysis (IPA). This system involves assigning each communication unit to one, and only one, of the 12 IPA communication categories. The 12 categories involved are (a) shows solidarity, raises other's status, (b) shows tension, jokes, laughs, (c) agrees, shows passive

acceptance, complies (d) gives suggestion, direction, (e) gives opinion, evaluation, analysis, (f) gives orientation, confirmation, (h) asks for opinion, evaluation, analysis, (i) asks for suggestion, direction, (j) disagrees, shows passive rejection, withholds help, (k) shows tension, withdraws out to field, and (l) shows antagonism, deflates status (see Appendix A).

The investigator then broke each of the transcripts down into communication units according to the criterion specified by Bales. Because of the very large number of rateable units generated by each couple, only a portion of the total number of units was selected for rating. In order to insure that the units selected for rating were representative of the total generated by each couple, the following procedure was used. An equal number of units were selected from the beginning, middle and end of the conversation. The number of speeches made by each spouse within each of these sections (beginning, middle and end) was the same. Five complete transcripts were then selected for rating. Two communication profiles were then constructed (a) the profile that resulted from the rating of the entire transcript, and (b) the profile that resulted from the rating of the reduced portion of the transcript. A Pearson

product moment correlation was then computed between the two sets of scores. The correlations ranged from +.81 to +.93 with a mean of +.87. From this point only the reduced versions of the transcripts were rated.

The 40 transcripts were then submitted to two trained raters. Both raters rated the first 20 transcripts using the conference method and both raters had to agree on the rating of each unit before it was assigned a rating category. This was done to insure that both raters were using the categories in the same manner. Each of the two raters then rated 15 of the remaining 20 transcripts. Ten of the transcripts were rated separately (i.e., rated by only one rater) and five of the transcripts were rated jointly (ratings completed by both raters independently). A third rater rated portions of the transcripts rated separately in order to check the inter-rater reliability. The mean inter-rater reliability, computed according to the method presented by Bales, was +.88 with a range of from +.79 to +.96. This figure is comparable to the +.85 reliability reported by Bales.

### Level

The level of marital interaction was assessed through

the use of the Owning of Feeling Scale (OF), the Internalization Scale (IE), and the Differentiation of Stimuli Scale (DS). These scales were originally developed for use in counseling situations (Schauble, 1973) and were modified slightly to fit the marital situation. A copy of these scales can be found in Appendices B, C, and D. The transcripts were submitted to two trained raters who assigned a rating along the IE, OF, and DS scales to each couple. The Pearson  $r$  was calculated between each pair of raters on each scale. The average inter-rater reliability was +.84 with a range of +.80 on the DS scale to +.92 on the OF scale.

### Content

Although the content of each of the discussions was controlled (by the use of TC as the only method of assigning discussion topics), a rough measure (C) of the ease and willingness of each couple to discuss each content area was computed as follows. Mean topic rank (operationally defined by adding the rank given to each topic by each spouse and dividing by two) was multiplied by the mean topic discussibility (defined by adding the discussibility rating made by each spouse for each topic and dividing by two). As the Content score (C) increased the ease and willingness

of the couple to discuss the content area decreased and the anxiety and discomfort associated with that particular content area increased.

## CHAPTER III

### RESULTS

#### Descriptive Statistics

##### Demographic Data

Forty couples participated in this research. Each couple had been married for a minimum of three years and considered themselves happily married. The mean number of years married among the couples was 10.9 years and the range was from 3 to 31 years. The mean number of children per couple was 1.6 with a range of from 0 to 4 children. The mean age for the husbands was 34.4 years and 32.6 years for the wives. Although only 37.5 per cent of the couples were student couples (at least one spouse currently in school), the mean number of years spent in school was 18.2 for the husbands and 15.6 for the wives (completion of college equals 16 years). A complete listing of the means, variances and standard deviations for the demographic variables can be found in Table 1.

Table 1  
Descriptive Statistics for the  
Demographic Variables

Variable	Mean	Variance	Standard Dev.
Number of years married	10.97	68.49	8.28
Number of children	1.65	1.52	1.23
Husband's age	34.35	78.44	8.86
Wife's age	32.58	73.89	8.60
Husband's age at marriage	23.20	14.93	3.86
Wife's age at marriage	22.05	31.07	5.57
Husband's education	18.15	10.18	3.19
Wife's education	15.58	5.84	2.42

Interpersonal  
Checklist

Each spouse completed the Leary Interpersonal Checklist (ICL) for (a) their ideal self, (b) their actual self, (c) their ideal spouse, (d) their actual spouse, and (e) the way they thought their spouse perceived them. The means for each factor for each of the five conditions can be found in Table 2.

Three levels of congruency were computed for each couple according to the procedure outlined above. The mean Actual Congruency (AC) score was 85.75 and the standard deviation was 37.83. The mean Ideal Congruency (IC) score was 65.10 and the standard deviation was 24.79. The mean Meta Congruency (MC) score was 84.30 and the standard deviation was 32.76. There was a significant positive intercorrelation between these three levels of congruency (see Table 3).

In addition to the ICL, each spouse completed the Marital Interaction Checklist. Each spouse rank ordered 10 areas of concern (finances, decision making, child rearing, equality with spouse, other's impressions of spouse, household duties, use of free time, sex, intimacy, and outside pressures) according to (a) how important that particular concern was to them in their marriage, and (b) how much difficulty that area



Table 2

The Means for Each Factor on the ICL Under Each Condition--Actual Self,  
Ideal Self, Ideal Spouse, Actual Spouse and the Way Spouse Sees Me

Condition	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Factor <sup>a</sup>								
Husband								
Ideal Self	12.6	10.4	9.4	2.7	3.1	7.0	14.8	12.9
Actual Self	12.4	9.6	10.6	6.5	6.6	9.4	11.6	10.3
Ideal Wife	10.9	9.5	8.8	2.7	3.4	7.1	13.6	12.8
Actual Wife	11.1	6.5	8.2	7.4	7.1	9.1	11.7	10.8
Wife Sees Me	15.6	9.8	10.5	6.8	4.3	8.5	11.9	10.6
Wife								
Ideal Self	13.9	10.7	9.0	1.6	2.9	7.3	13.9	13.1
Actual Self	9.9	8.8	10.3	9.7	8.8	12.8	11.6	12.1
Ideal Husband	11.9	11.1	8.5	2.1	2.7	6.8	13.5	13.0
Actual Husband	13.7	10.8	10.2	5.5	3.9	7.7	13.0	11.1
Husband Sees Me	11.2	7.7	10.2	11.3	8.0	11.3	11.3	11.3

Note. The maximum score on any factor is 40.

aFactor 1 is Managerial/Autocratic  
Factor 2 is Competitive/Narcissistic  
Factor 3 is Aggressive/Sadistic  
Factor 4 is Rebellious/Distrustful

Factor 5 is Self-effacing/Masochistic  
Factor 6 is Docile/Dependent  
Factor 7 is Cooperative/Overconventional  
Factor 8 is Responsible/Hypernormal

Table 3  
 Intercorrelation Between Actual, Ideal  
 and Meta Congruency

Level	Level	
	Actual	Ideal
Ideal	+.48	--
Meta	+.92	+.48

Note. All correlations are significant beyond the .01 level.

caused in their marriage. The two most important areas for the husbands were (a) expressions of intimacy and (b) sex. The two most important areas for the wives were (a) expressions of intimacy and (b) child rearing. The three least important areas for the husbands were (a) other's impressions of spouse, (b) household duties, and (c) equality with spouse. The three least important areas for the wives were (a) other's impressions of spouse, (b) equality with spouse, and (c) household duties. The two areas that caused the most difficulty for both the husbands and the wives were (a) outside pressures and (b) finances. Both the husbands and the wives felt that the areas that caused the least difficulty in their marriages were (a) other's impressions of their spouse, (b) equality with their spouse, and (c) expressions of intimacy.

There was strong agreement between the husbands and wives as to those areas that were important in their marriage ( $r_s = .65$ ,  $df = 8$ ,  $t = 2.41$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and those areas that caused difficulty for them ( $r_s = 1.0$ ,  $df = 8$ ,  $t = 89.44$ ,  $p < .01$ ). A complete breakdown of these rankings can be found in Table 4.

Each spouse was asked (a) what their spouse could do that would make them the happiest, (b) how often this took

Table 4  
The Mean Rank and Overall Rank of Various Areas of Concern

Concern	Importance			Difficulty		
	Mean Rank		Overall*	Mean Rank		Overall**
	H	W		H	W	
Financial	3.7	3.8	5	2.7	3.2	2
Decision Making	3.4	3.2	3	3.7	3.8	3
Child Rearing	3.5	3.0	4	4.5	4.3	6
Equality	5.7	5.6	8	6.1	5.9	9
Others Impressions	7.1	7.7	10	7.4	7.7	10
Household Duties	6.1	5.4	9	4.1	4.0	4
Free Time	5.2	5.2	7	4.2	4.1	5
Sexual Concerns	3.2	3.9	2	4.8	4.5	7
Intimacy	2.9	2.5	1	5.0	5.5	8
Outside Pressures	4.1	4.2	6	2.4	2.0	1

Note. H = husband; W = wife

\*  $r_s = .65$ ,  $df = 8$ ,  $t = 2.41$ ,  $p < .05$

\*\*  $r_s = 1.0$ ,  $df = 8$ ,  $t = 87.44$ ,  $p < .01$

place, (c) what they could do that would make their spouse the happiest, and (d) how often this took place. The responses to questions (a) and (c) were coded into the following categories:

1. Decrease the frequency of a specific behavior that was considered undesirable.
2. Increase the frequency of a specific behavior that was considered desirable.
3. Self-acceptance and being happy with life.
4. Affirmation of self or spouse (i.e., "make me feel that I'm important," "respect," "be understanding and supportive," "have an interest in what I'm doing," etc.).
5. Spend more time together doing enjoyable things.
6. Engage in sexual intercourse and lovemaking with greater frequency and/or intensity.
7. Unknown or don't know.

A summary of the responses can be found in Table 5.

The responses to the questions about how often these events took place were coded into the following nine categories:

1. More than once a day.
2. Once a day.
3. Once every few days (4 X week).
4. Three times a week.
5. Two times a week.

Table 5  
Responses to Questions on What Would Provide the Greatest  
Happiness to Self and Spouse

Question	Response Category					Sex	Unknown
	1	2	3	4	5		
Decrease Behavior		Increase Behavior	Self-Ac- ceptance	Affirm- ation	Time To- gether		
What Could Your Spouse Do to Make You Happiest?*							
Husband	15.0	15.0	20.0	22.0	8.0	15.0	5.0
Wife	2.5	22.5	10.0	35.0	25.0	5.0	0.0
What Could You Do to Make Your Spouse Happiest?*							
Husband	2.0	27.0	2.0	37.0	15.0	12.0	5.0
Wife	12.5	25.0	12.5	20.0	2.5	22.5	5.0

Note. Table figures represent the per cent of the husbands or wives making the indicated response.

\* Chi Square = 34.33 df = 4  $p < .05$

\*\* Chi Square = 22.03 df = 3  $p < .01$

6. Once a week.
7. Once a month.
8. Less than once a month.
9. No answer.

A summary of the responses can be found in Table 6.

Each spouse was asked to report (a) how often they had serious conversation with their spouse dealing with their marriage, (b) how often they argued with their spouse, and (c) how long the effect of the argument lasted. The responses to the first and second of these questions were coded into the following categories:

1. Once a day.
2. Three times a week.
3. One time a week.
4. Once every two weeks.
5. Once a month.
6. Once every two months.
7. Less than once every two months.
8. No answer.

The responses to the third question were coded into the following categories:

1. A couple of minutes.
2. 15 minutes.

Table 6

Responses to Questions on the Frequency Which the  
Most Desired Behavior is Emitted

Question	Response Category										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
More than		1 X	4 X	3 X	2 X	1 X	1 X	Less Than	No		
1 X Day	Day	Day	Week	Week	Week	Week	Month	1 X Mo.	Ans.		
<b>How Often Does Your Spouse Do What Will Make you the Happiest?*</b>											
Husband	22.5	7.5	12.5	5.0	0.0	7.5	12.5	22.5	20.0		
Wife	20.0	10.0	22.5	2.5	2.5	10.0	7.5	12.5	2.5		
<b>How Often Do You Do What Will Make Your Spouse the Happiest?*</b>											
Husband	20.0	5.0	22.5	7.5	7.5	2.5	5.0	17.5	12.5		
Wife	25.0	2.5	15.0	2.5	2.5	20.0	10.0	15.0	7.5		

\* Chi Square = 26.58, df = 5,  $p < .05$ ; Kendal's Tau B = .34,  $p < .01$

\*\* Chi Square = 10.35, df = 6,  $p = NS$ ; Kendal's Tau B = .32,  $p < .01$



3. 30 minutes.
4. One hour.
5. 3 hours.
6. Most of the day.
7. Several days.
8. A week or more.
9. No answer.

A summary of the responses to these items may be found in Table 7.

Fourteen items on the MIC were taken from the Bienvenu Marital Communication Inventory. The mean scores for the husbands and wives were 45.37 and 47.01, respectively (the maximum score possible was 56). The difference was significant at the .05 level ( $t = 2.05$ ,  $df = 39$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Each spouse was asked to indicate how satisfied they were with their marriage on a seven-point scale. The mean satisfaction ratings for the husbands and wives were 6.25 and 6.00, respectively. The difference in means was not significant ( $t = 1.54$ ,  $df = 39$ ,  $p = NS$ ).

#### High Congruency vs. Low Congruency

The 20 couples with the highest congruency score at each level (Actual, Ideal, and Meta) were assigned to the Low Congruency Group (LC). The 20 couples with the lowest

Table 7

Frequency of Serious Conversations, Frequency of Arguments and How Long the Effect of the Argument Persisted in the Relationship

Question	1 X Day	Response Category (in %)										8	9
		2 X Week	3 X Week	4 X 2 Weeks	5 X 1 Month	6 X 2 Months	7 X 1 Less Than 2 Mos.	8	9	10	11	12	13
Conversation*													
Husband	5.0	12.5	27.5	7.5	15.0	12.5	17.5	2.5	---				
Wife	10.0	2.5	12.5	10.0	22.5	10.0	27.5	5.0	---				
Argument**													
Husband	0.0	7.5	17.5	17.5	22.5	7.5	22.5	5.0	---				
Wife	0.0	10.0	15.0	30.0	22.5	7.5	12.5	2.5	---				
Couple	15 Min.	30 Min.	1 Hr.	3 Hrs.	All Day	Several Days	Week	No					
Effect***													
Husband	20.0	22.5	7.5	20.0	15.0	5.0	5.0	2.5					
Wife	15.0	27.5	5.0	12.5	10.0	15.0	5.0	7.5					

Note. All entries are in per cent.

\* Chi Square = 17.88, df = 6,  $p = .01$ , Kendal's Tau B = .37,  $p < .01$

\*\* Chi Square = 28.61, df = 5,  $p = NS$ ; Kendal's Tau B = .23,  $p < .05$

\*\*\* Chi Square = 11.11, df = 6,  $p = NS$ ; Kendal's Tau B = .19,  $p < .05$

congruency scores at each level (Actual, Ideal, and Meta) were assigned to the High Congruency Group (HC). Note that a high congruency score indicated that there is relatively low congruency between the perceptions of the couple (thus these couples were assigned to the LC group). At each congruency level (Actual, Ideal and Meta) the HC and LC groups had means that were significantly different ( $p < .01$ ) (see Table 8).

#### Demographic, ICL, MIC

Each of the demographic, ICL, and MIC variables discussed above was evaluated to test the hypothesis that there would be between group differences (HC vs. LC) on these variables. The data indicate that (a) the HC couples were married significantly longer than the LC couples at the Actual Congruency level and the Meta Congruency level, (b) the HC couples had a greater number of children than the LC couples at the Meta Congruency level, and (c) that the HC husbands and wives were significantly older than the LC husbands and wives at the Meta Congruency level. A summary of these data can be found in Table 9.

There were considerable differences found between the HC and LC couples' performance on the ICL. In all but one

Table 8

The Mean Congruency Score for the HC and LC  
Groups at Each Level of Congruency

Level	Group		Sig. Level
	HC	LC	
Actual	59.38	114.89	.01*
Ideal	47.00	83.20	.01**
Meta	62.68	103.86	.01***

\*  $t = -6.83$ ,  $df = 38$ ,  $p < .01$

\*\*  $t = -6.77$ ,  $df = 38$ ,  $p < .01$

\*\*\*  $t = -5.07$ ,  $df = 38$ ,  $p < .01$

Table 9  
Probability of Between Group Differences on  
the Demographic Variables

Variable	Congruency Level		Meta
	Actual	Ideal	
Years Married	.05	NS <sup>a</sup>	.05
Number of Children	NS	NS	.01
Husband's Age	NS	NS	.05
Wife's Age	NS	NS	.05
Husband's Education	NS	NS	NS
Wife's Education	NS	NS	NS

Note. All statistics were t tests with  $df = 38$ . A F test was conducted to test the hypothesis that the variance of group HC was equal to the variance of group LC. When the probability level of the F value was greater than .1 the pooled variance estimate was utilized to compute t. When the F level was less than .1 a separate variance estimate for each group was utilized and a degree of freedom correction was employed in computing t.

<sup>a</sup>NS = not significant

case (HAW, factor 1 at the Meta level) the significant difference occurred when ICL scores for the HC couples were less than those for the LC couples. See Table 10 for a complete presentation of this data.

There were no significant differences in how the HC and LC couples rank ordered the areas of importance and difficulty at any congruency level (Actual  $\chi^2 = 7.54$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p = ns$ ; Ideal  $\chi^2 = 8.41$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p = ns$ ; Meta  $\chi^2 = 6.39$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p = ns$ ). At the Actual Congruency level the HC husbands reported that they did what they thought would make their wives the happiest significantly more often than the LC husbands ( $\chi^2 = 19.78$ ,  $df = 7$ ,  $p < .01$ ). No such difference was found at the Ideal Congruency level ( $\chi^2 = 4.40$ ,  $df = 7$ ,  $p = ns$ ) or the Meta Congruency level ( $\chi^2 = 10.19$ ,  $df = 8$ ,  $p = ns$ ). A similar finding was that the HC husbands reported that they felt that their wives did what would make them the happiest significantly more often than the LC husbands ( $\chi^2 = 14.38$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p < .05$ ). No such differences were found at either of the other two congruency levels (Ideal  $\chi^2 = 5.47$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p = ns$ ; Meta  $\chi^2 = 5.95$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p = ns$ ). No significant differences were found at the Actual level ( $\chi^2 = 9.25$ ,  $df = 8$ ,  $p = ns$ ), the Ideal level ( $\chi^2 = 10.6$ ,  $df = 8$ ,  $p = ns$ ) or the Meta level ( $\chi^2 = 7.61$ ,  $df = 7$ ,  $p = ns$ ).

Table 10

The Probability of Differences Between the HC and LC  
Groups Means on the ICL at the Three Levels  
of Congruency (Actual, Ideal, Meta)

Condition	ICL Factor <sup>a</sup>							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<u>Actual Congruency</u>								
Husband								
HIS								
HAS							**D	
HIW								
HAW					**			
HWH		*C					*	
Wife								
WIS								
WAS					*	*		
WIH	**	**		**			**	**
WAH						*		
WHW					*			
<u>Ideal Congruency</u>								
Husband								
HIS								
HAS				*				
HIW								
HAW								
HWH								
Wife								
WIS						*	*	
WAS								
WIH						**		
WAH				*				
WHW								

Table 10 (Continued)

Condition	ICL Factor							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<u>Meta Congruency</u>								
Husband								
<u>HIS</u>								
<u>HAS</u>								
<u>HIW</u>								
<u>HAW</u>								
<u>HWH</u>								
Wife								
<u>WIS</u>								
<u>WAS</u>								
<u>WIH</u>								
<u>WAH</u>								

Note. The probability levels were computed with a t test. Prior to computing the t a F test was conducted to see if there was a significant difference in the variance of the two groups. When this F value fell below  $p = .1$  a separate variance term was entered in the t computation for each group and an adjustment was made in the degrees of freedom involved. When the F test indicated a  $p$  of greater than .1 the pooled variance estimate was used.

<sup>a</sup>Factor 1 is Managerial/Autocratic  
 Factor 2 is Competitive/Narcisistic  
 Factor 3 is Aggressive/Sadistic  
 Factor 4 is Rebellious/Distrustful  
 Factor 5 is Self-effacing/Masochistic  
 Factor 6 is Docile/Dependant  
 Factor 7 is Cooperative/Overconventional  
 Factor 8 is Responsible/Hypernormal

<sup>b</sup> $p < .01$

<sup>c</sup> $p < .05$

<sup>d</sup>Unless set off by ( ) the HC mean score was less than the LC mean score.



in the frequency which the wives report doing what they felt would make their husbands the happiest.

There was no significant difference between the HC and the LC groups in the frequency that they reported having serious conversations dealing with their marriage (Actual  $\chi^2 = 3.89$ ,  $df = 7$ ,  $p = ns$ ; Ideal  $\chi^2 = 4.72$ ,  $df = 7$ ,  $p = ns$ ; Meta  $\chi^2 = 4.06$ ,  $df = 7$ ,  $p = ns$ ) nor was there any significant differences in the frequency with which the HC and LC couples argued (Actual  $\chi^2 = 6.73$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p = ns$ ; Ideal  $\chi^2 = 5.68$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p = ns$ ; Meta  $\chi^2 = 6.33$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p = ns$ ) or in the length of time these arguments effected their relationship (Actual  $\chi^2 = 8.73$ ,  $df = 8$ ,  $p = ns$ ; Ideal  $\chi^2 = 9.33$ ,  $df = 8$ ,  $p = ns$ ; Meta  $\chi^2 = 9.09$ ,  $df = 8$ ,  $p = ns$ ).

The HC husbands had a significantly higher Bienvenu score than the LC husbands ( $t = 1.79$ ,  $df = 38$ ,  $p < .05$ ) at the Meta level, although this did not hold for the Actual level ( $t = .47$ ,  $df = 38$ ,  $p = ns$ ) or the Ideal level ( $t = -.43$ ,  $df = 38$ ,  $p = ns$ ). There was no significant difference between the HC and the LC wives Bienvenu scores at any level (Actual  $t = -.96$ ,  $df = 38$ ,  $p = ns$ ; Ideal  $t = .96$ ,  $df = 93$ ,  $p = ns$ ; Meta  $t = -.04$ ,  $df = 38$ ,  $p = ns$ ). There was no significant difference in the degree of marital satisfaction reported by the HC and LC couples at any congruency

level (Actual  $\chi^2 = 4.72$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p = ns$ ; Ideal  $\chi^2 = 3.96$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p = ns$ ; Meta  $\chi^2 = 4.31$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p = ns$ ).

### Hypothesis One

The first null hypothesis to be tested was:

$H_1$ : There will be no significant difference in the willingness and tension which the HC and LC couples will experience in regard to the content of various discussion topics.

The mean content score (C) for the HC and the LC groups were computed at each congruency level (Actual, Ideal, Meta). The significance level associated with the differences in mean C was tested by computing the  $t$  statistic. Only one of the 33 tests conducted proved significant beyond the .05 level. Since the probability of obtaining one significant result out of 33 such tests is .82 by chance alone (Kirk, 1968), this hypothesis was accepted. See Table 11 for a summary of these data.

### Hypothesis Two

The second null hypothesis to be tested was:

$H_2$ : There will be no significant difference in the level of communication (as measured by

Table 11

The Mean Content Score for the HC and LC Couples at Each Congruency Level

Topic <sup>b</sup>	Actual		Ideal		Meta	
	HC	LC	HC	LC	HC	LC
How you have changed since marriage	13.01	9.64	10.71	11.89	12.35	10.29
The effect of touchy areas	29.40	30.82	27.62	32.36	29.35	30.87
How household duties are divided	17.03	14.36	15.12	16.23	16.17	15.23
Attributes of spouse you enjoy	7.08	6.25	7.25	6.13	7.28	6.05
Effect of finances on marriage	9.81	14.28	10.66	13.30	9.25	14.84
Ways of expressing intimacy	19.24	22.01	18.75	22.32	21.18	20.07
How you communicate happiness	17.06	16.17	15.33	17.78	16.17	17.06
What your marriage means to you	11.83	16.08	11.84	15.88	12.64	15.28
Effect of a strong disagreement	24.01	24.13	21.75	26.16	23.60	24.53
Most positive thing you have done with spouse	13.43	15.95	12.17	16.98	13.37	16.02

<sup>a</sup><sub>p</sub> represents the probability level associated with the difference between the HC and LC means.

<sup>b</sup>The complete topics as presented can be found in Appendix F.

\*Significant at the .05 level.

the IE, OF and DS scales) exhibited by the HC and LC couples.

The mean IE, OF, and DS score was computed for the HC and the LC groups at each level of congruency (Actual, Ideal, Meta). The t statistic was computed to test the significance level of the differences in these mean scores. All the t values proved to be significant at the .05 level with the exception of DS at the Ideal Congruency level. This hypothesis was, therefore, rejected in favor of the alternate hypothesis that HC and LC couples would exhibit significant differences in their communication level as measured by the IE, OF, and DS scales. In each case the HC couples had the higher score. See Table 12 for a summary of these results.

### Hypothesis Three

The third hypothesis to be investigated was:

H<sub>3</sub>: There will be no significant difference in the communication style exhibited by the HC and LC couples.

The relative frequency that each couple used each of the 12 communication categories was computed. This 12 score vector was then analyzed with a Multivariate Analysis of Variance

Table 12

The Mean IE, OF and DS Score for the HC and LC Couples at Each Congruency Level and the Significance Level of the Difference

Scale	Actual		Ideal		Meta	
	HC	LC	HC	LC	HC	LC
IE <sup>b</sup>	3.85	3.39	.01	3.79	3.45	.05
OF <sup>c</sup>	3.92	3.52	.01	3.85	3.69	.05
DS <sup>d</sup>	3.78	3.34	.01	3.65	3.47	NS

<sup>a</sup>p represents the probability level associated with the difference in means.

<sup>b</sup>Internalization Scale

<sup>c</sup>Owning of Feelings Scale

<sup>d</sup>Discrimination of Stimuli Scale

(MANOVA) using a fixed effect nested model. The main effects in this model were (a) Congruency, (b) Couples (nested within congruency), (c) Topic Congruency (TC), and (d) the TC X Congruency interaction. This analysis was conducted at each of the three levels of congruency (Actual, Ideal and Meta).

This analysis yielded a significant Congruency effect and a significant Couples effect at all three congruency levels. The TC X Congruency interaction, and the TC main effect were all nonsignificant at each of the three congruency levels. Hypothesis three was, therefore, rejected in favor of the hypothesis that HC and LC couples would exhibit significant differences in communication style. For a summary of these data and the appropriate F and p statistics, see Table 13.

In order to test which particular variable or group of variables was responsible for these differences in overall communication style, a series of univariate Analyses of Variance were conducted. The following effects were entered in the model (a) Congruency, (b) Couples (nested within Congruency), (c) Topic Congruency, and (d) TC X Congruency interaction. At the Actual Congruency level the HC couples exhibited significantly more joking, laughing, and other positive emotional responses than the LC couples. The LC

Table 13

Summary Table of the Multivariate Analysis of Variance  
for the Bales Communication Categories  
at Each Congruency Level

Source	Actual		Ideal		Meta	
	F	P	F	P	F	P
Congruency	2.21	.02	2.04	.03	2.01	.03
Couples (congr)	2.77	.001	2.85	.001	2.81	.001
Topic Congruency	.72	.721	.75	.78	.76	.85
TC X Congruency	.58	.94	1.12	.33	.68	.86

couples exhibited a significantly higher frequency of (a) attempts to direct their partner, (b) requests for repetition or clarification, and (c) antagonistic self assertions and put downs of their partner than the HC couples. At the Ideal Congruency level the HC couples exhibited significantly more expressions of opinion and feeling than did the LC couples. The LC couples exhibited a significantly higher frequency of (a) requests for repetition or clarification, and (b) disagreement, rejection and other negative emotional reactions to their partner than the HC couples. At the Meta congruency level the HC couples exhibited significantly more joking, laughing and other positive emotional responses to their partner than did the LC couples. The LC couples exhibited a significantly higher frequency of (a) requests for repetition or clarification, and (b) requests for direction from their partner than the HC couples. See Table 14 for a summary of these data.

Despite these differences in communication style, there was no significant difference in the number of speeches made by the HC and LC couples at the three congruency levels ( $\underline{t} = 1.07$ ,  $\underline{t} = .80$ ,  $\underline{t} = .06$ ,  $df = 118$ ,  $p = ns$ ) or in the total number of communication units used by the HC and LC couples ( $\underline{t} = .99$ ,  $\underline{t} = .97$ ,  $\underline{t} = 1.53$ ,  $df = 118$ ,  $p = ns$ ).



Table 14

Summary Table of the Univariate Analysis of Variance for  
the Individual Communication Categories

Source	Communication Category <sup>a</sup>											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Congruency	NS <sup>b</sup>	.05	NS	.01	NS	NS	.01	NS	NS	NS	NS	.05
Couples (Congruency)	NS	.01	.01	NS	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	NS	.01
Topic Congruency	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
TC X Congruency	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
Ideal Congruency												
Congruency	NS	NS	NS	NS	.01	NS	.05	NS	NS	.05	NS	NS
Couples (Congruency)	NS	.01	.01	NS	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	NS	.01
Topic Congruency	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
TC X Congruency	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
Meta Congruency												
Congruency	NS	.05	NS	NS	NS	NS	.05	NS	.05	NS	NS	NS
Couples (Congruency)	NS	.01	.01	NS	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	NS	.01
Topic Congruency	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
TC X Congruency	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
Category 1 = shows solidarity												
Category 2 = laugh, joke, positive response												
Category 3 = agree, complies, understands												
Category 4 = gives direction												
Category 5 = gives feeling, opinion, analysis												
Category 6 = gives information												
Category 7 = asks for information												
Category 8 = asks for feeling, opinion												
Category 9 = asks for direction												
Category 10 = disagrees, rejects												
Category 11 = shows tension, negative reaction												
Category 12 = shows antagonism												

<sup>b</sup>Entries represent the probability level associated with the F value  
(NS = not significant)

### Summary

The results of this research supported the following hypotheses:

1. HC and LC couples do not differ in (a) their expressed willingness to discuss various content areas, or (b) the tension and anxiety they reported they would feel in discussing various content areas. This was supported at the Actual Congruency level, the Ideal Congruency level and the Meta Congruency level.
2. HC and LC couples differed significantly in (a) their ability to accurately perceive and internalize their feelings as coming from within themselves, and (c) their ability to show immediate awareness of their unique characteristics and the reactions they stimulated in others.
3. HC and LC couples exhibited significantly different communication styles.

## CHAPTER IV

### DISCUSSION

The data presented above indicate that the degree of congruency between the interpersonal perceptions that husbands and wives hold of themselves and their spouse is associated with different styles and levels of communication. The data on communication style indicate that High Congruity couples exhibit (a) a higher frequency of positive emotional responses to their partner and (b) a higher frequency of expression of feeling and opinion, than was observed among the Low Congruity couples. The data also indicate that Low Congruity couples exhibit (a) a higher frequency of communication aimed at directing their spouse, (b) a higher frequency of communication acts aimed at eliciting direction from their spouse, (c) a higher frequency of requests for repetition and clarification from their spouse, (d) a higher frequency of antagonistic behavior or other negative emotional responses directed toward their spouse, and (e) a higher frequency of open rejection of their spouse's ideas, suggestions, or opinions.

The data relating to communication level indicate that High Congruity couples communicate in a manner which displayed (a) a greater willingness to actively and spontaneously engage in an inward probing of their feelings about themselves and their spouse, (b) a greater ability to express their feelings with emotional proximity, and to demonstrate the awareness that their feelings were tied to specific behavior of themselves or their spouse, and (c) a greater awareness of their unique characteristics of themselves as individuals and as a couple and the reaction they stimulated in each other and in other people, than was displayed by Low Congruity couples.

It is interesting to observe that there were significant differences between the High and Low Congruency wives' perceptions of their ideal husbands on five of the eight ICL factors at the Actual Congruency level (remember that the WIH ratings were not used to construct the HC and LC groups at this level). These data suggest that the LC wives would ideally like their husbands to be more managerial, more competitive, more distrustful, more cooperative, and more responsible than the HC wives. We may hypothesize that LC wives are more demanding in the behaviors they expect and desire from their husbands, and that they are less flexible

in the behavior they will accept from their husbands, than the HC wives. This might indicate that the LC wives expect their husbands to conform to the traditional male role (which is of a managerial, competitive, responsible male) to a greater extent than the HC wives. Although more research is needed to verify this speculation it is supported by the conclusions presented earlier by Corsini (1956a, 1956b).

There were no significant differences between High and Low Congruity couples in (a) the areas that the couple found important or sources of difficulty to them in their marriage, (b) the frequency with which the couple argued, (c) the length of time the effect of this argument persisted, (d) the frequency with which the couple engaged in a serious conversation about their marriage, (e) the emotional reaction they expressed toward various discussion content areas or their willingness to discuss these areas if requested to do so, or (f) the level of satisfaction with the marriage. It is interesting to note that High Congruity husbands reported that (a) they emitted the behavior that would make their wives the happiest, and (b) that their wives emitted the behavior that would make them (the husbands) the happiest, significantly more often than was found among the Low Congruity husbands. One may speculate that

High Congruity husbands give and receive a greater amount of reinforcement than Low Congruity husbands. Further research is needed to verify this speculation.

In Rogerian terms, the High Congruity couples appear to be more in touch with their feelings, and more empathic and genuine than the Low Congruity couples. This hypothesis is supported by the data on communication level. An inspection of the communication style data leads to the hypothesis that the High Congruity couples exhibit a more facilitative style of communication than the Low Congruity couples. This style is characterized as being (a) open, (b) feeling oriented, (c) non-directive, and (d) non-rejecting.

Up to this point data have been presented that indicate that High and Low Congruity couples communicate with different styles and at different levels. A question which needs to be attended to is, what produces congruency? How does one couple establish a high degree of congruency in their perceptions of each other while another couple does not? The data suggest that congruency increases as the number of years the couple has been married increases. We may hypothesize that an important variable in producing

congruency is the time the couple has spent together in an ongoing intimate relationship. A further hypothesis would be that the long term, intimate, interactive nature of this relationship provides each couple with the opportunity to (a) closely observe the behavior, opinions and feelings of their spouse, (b) observe their own behavior and feelings toward one person over a prolonged period of time, and (c) to receive feedback from their spouse as to how they are being perceived. This hypothetical feedback process gives each individual the opportunity to adjust their perceptions of both themselves and their spouse on a regular basis and to the extent that such adjustments are accurate congruency increases. The intimate long term nature of the marital relationship gives added valence to the feedback provided by the spouse.

If this hypothesized feedback process is indeed important in producing congruency it merits further examination. By its very nature, feedback is mediated by communication. In order for feedback to take place, the couple must be willing to communicate with each other about a wide variety of topics dealing with their relationship. The data on the couple's emotional reactions to various discussion content areas suggest that both the High and the Low

Congruency couples experience the same amount of anxiety and tension when faced with the task of discussing various aspects of their relationship. If the couples are equally willing to talk with each other about these topics (i.e., to provide feedback) then we may hypothesize that the important feedback variable is not whether or not couples communicate with each other, but rather, how they communicate. The client centered therapy research clearly indicates that communicating in an open, non-directive empathetic manner within a meaningful relationship with an important other facilitates self awareness, self understanding, and interpersonal understanding between the self and the other (Meador & Rogers, 1973). Data have already been presented that suggest that this facilitative method of communication is characteristic of High Congruity couples. The Low Congruity couples, on the other hand, provided data that suggest that their communication style was directive and rejecting. If the feedback hypothesis is correct, we would expect facilitative feedback to enhance congruency and non-facilitative feedback to deter congruency, and that is exactly what the data seem to suggest. The hypothesized feedback process and congruency are closely related. As congruency increases, the couples communication becomes more facilitative. This in turn improves the feedback process which increases congruency. It may be



speculated that as a couple's communication style becomes more facilitative, the rate at which congruency increases becomes greater. A couple with a non-facilitative communication would tend to have a poor feedback process and congruency would develop very slowly. Further research is needed to verify this speculation.

It should be pointed out that the communication style data indicate that there was a high degree of variability in the communication style adopted by individual couples within both the High and the Low Congruity groups. Thus, a high level of congruency was not associated with a specific communication style. Beyond the broad basic differences outlined above, each couple is speculated to have adopted the style that was most consistent with their own needs as a couple and as individuals. There is some evidence that High Congruity couples exhibited a greater degree of variability in the communication styles that they chose than did the Low Congruity couples. Although this interpretation is speculative in nature, it has some support in the anecdotal reports of the couples.

The anecdotal reports of two of the High Congruity couples illustrate this point. Couple A described their initial years of marriage as somewhat chaotic and filled with

arguments. They reported that they were initially unable to express their feelings openly to each other and that they would let their anger build up inside themselves until they exploded and a week long argument ensued. As they got to know each other (and presumably became more congruent) they began talking regularly about their feelings toward each other. Now when a problem comes up they immediately sit down together and talk it out. Couple B, on the other hand, reported that they had no initial difficulty in talking about their feelings, but that their early marriage was also chaotic and filled with arguments. They soon discovered that their strategy of immediately sitting down and talking about what was bothering them did not work for them. As they got to know each other better (and presumably became more congruent) they discovered that the way to handle such situations was to tell their spouse that they were angry and upset but not to try to talk about it until the next day. In each case the couple was flexible enough to alter dramatically their communication process to fit their own unique needs. The ways in which they dealt with the problem turned out to be almost direct opposites, but for them it worked.

Despite the differences that have been noted between

the High and Low Congruity couples, it must be remembered that every couple who participated in this research considered themselves happily married. The data indicate that congruency, at least within the range measured here, does not effect marital satisfaction. Some of the couples seemed to value high congruency as an important aspect of their relationship while other couples did not (and were happy without it).

If, as the data suggest, congruency may not result in a happy functional marriage, what does? Although no quantitative data were collected to answer this question, some anecdotal observations of a qualitative nature may be in order. As I talked with each of these couples some very striking similarities became apparent. Perhaps the most interesting observation was that virtually all of the individuals interviewed described their parents' marriages in very positive terms. While some individuals were clear that there were aspects of their parents' relationship that they did not want in their marriage, virtually everyone felt that their parents considered themselves happily married. Only four of the 80 individuals I talked to reported that their parents were unhappy or had divorced each other, and three of these individuals were part of a

low congruity marriage. When asked what influence this had upon their own marriage, all three of the Low Congruity couples described how they had found it hard to trust each other and often expected their current spouse to behave like one of their parents. The one individual who had experienced the divorce of her parents and who was part of a high congruity marriage reported that as her parents' marriage fell apart, she had spent more and more time at her grandparents' house down the street, and that she felt that they had a good happy marriage. It seems appropriate to hypothesize that the ability to sustain a satisfactory marriage depends a great deal on the parental models provided during childhood.

A second similarity was that virtually all of the couples characterized their marriages as a partnership, in which the needs, feelings, and desires of each spouse were given equal value. The attitudes expressed were ones of compromise and unselfishness. Each individual stood ready to change or alter their behavior or desires in accordance with the needs of their partner. Each couple reported that they had entered the relationship (marriage) with the expectation that their marriage would last forever. No one

felt that divorce was morally wrong, but all felt that the use of divorce or separation as a problem solving tool must be the very last option they exercised. In short, the couples were uniform in their willingness to confront any problem and attempt to solve it so that the marriage could be preserved. The effectiveness of this orientation can be seen in the fact that only two of the 80 individuals had been married previously, in spite of the high divorce rate in the general population. Interestingly, both of those individuals were part of low congruity marriages at this point.

Previous research (i.e., Corsini, 1956a, 1956b; Dymond, 1954; Luckey, 1960a, 1960b, 1960c) has indicated that perceptual congruency is associated with marital happiness. In the current research happily married couples exhibited a wide range of congruency scores (ranging from 29 to 259). While no data on unhappily married couples were collected, the statistical qualities of the ICL make it impossible to have a congruency score greater than 320. The couples that participated in this research therefore fell across almost the entire range of possible scores, and all considered themselves happily married. It is possible, of course, that unhappily married couples would fall in the upper portion

of this range with greater frequency than happily married couples. This observation, along with the finding that there was no difference in the level of marital satisfaction among the couples sampled, leads to the tentative speculation that perceptual congruency may not be associated with marital happiness (at least not to the extent suggested by previous research). It is possible that the changes that have taken place, in the 16 years since the early research was completed, in the institution of marriage have altered the relationship between perceptual congruency and marital happiness. The speculative nature of these ideas must be recognized and further research is needed in this area.

Several limitations must be kept in mind when interpreting the results of this research. The first limitation is that the couples who participated in this research were very educated, presumably above average in intelligence, and very verbal. It is impossible to determine the effect that these variables had upon the data. Generalizations to less educated, less intelligent, and/or less verbal couples are not warranted without further research. The second limitation is that only couples who described their marriages as happy participated in this research. Although there are no reasons to question the accuracy of these perceptions, it

is always possible that some of the couples distorted their perceptions of their marriages for some unknown motivation (unknown to the investigator and perhaps to the couples themselves). We must also be cautious in assuming that the data reported here are characteristic of happy couples only. Further research is needed to investigate how unhappily married couples would perform on the same tasks. The third limitation is the result of the use of transcripts to investigate communication style. The use of transcripts limited the amount of information the raters have available to them. More accurate ratings might have been made from audio or video tapes.

### Summary

The data on the relationship between high and low congruency and communication have been presented. These data indicate that (a) High Congruity couples employ a different communication style than Low Congruity couples, and (b) High Congruity couples communicate at a higher level than Low Congruity couples. A feedback process hypothesis was presented as a possible mechanism for the development of congruency.

The fact that all subject couples considered themselves

happily married was stressed and the finding that High and Low congruity couples reported the same amount of marital satisfaction was taken to support this idea. Similarities across all couples were found in that (a) almost every individual spouse reported that his or her parents had been happily married, and (b) each couple described their marriage as a partnership in which the needs and feelings of each spouse were given equal priority.



## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INTERACTION PROCESS ANALYSIS  
CATEGORIES

Each communication unit is classified into one and only one of the following categories:

1. Shows solidarity, raises others status, gives help or reward.
2. Shows tension, release, jokes, laughs, shows satisfaction.
3. Agrees, shows passive acceptance, understands, concurs, complies.
4. Gives suggestion, direction, implying autonomy for others.
5. Gives opinion, evaluation, analysis, expresses feeling or wish.
6. Gives orientation, information, repeats, clarifies, confirms.
7. Asks for orientation, information, repetition, or confirmation.
8. Asks for opinion, evaluation, analysis, expression of feeling.
9. Asks for suggestion, direction, possible ways of action.
10. Disagrees, shows passive rejection, formality, withholds help.
11. Shows tension, asks for help, withdraws out of field.
12. Shows antagonism, deflates other's status, defends or asserts self.

## APPENDIX B

DIFFERENTIATION OF STIMULI IN INTERPERSONAL  
PROCESSES: A SCALE FOR MEASUREMENT

Level 1    The couple seems unable to identify or differentiate their feelings, problems or concerns and are unwilling or unable to move in this direction.

Example:    The couple may show either no grasp of their feelings or problems or they seem to respond to everything in very much the same way.

In Summary: The couple seems totally unable or unwilling to make discriminations between their feeling or the people and events in their life.

Level 2    The couple may talk about different feelings and problems but they show little grasp of real differences among them or of their effect.

Example:    The couple may respond in a rehearsed manner to people and events as if their reactions were pre-determined by stereotyped expectations.

In Summary: The couple seems to differentiate between their feelings, people, or events at only a superficial level.

Level 3    The couple vacillates between discussing different stimuli and their effect on them and responding in a general, unclear fashion.

Example:    The couple may initially make clear differentiations about their world, but they are unable to productively maintain this behavior and lapse into hazy generalizations which do not seem to have immediate meaning.

In Summary: The couple clearly differentiates between discrete stimuli, but are unable to develop their perceptions or use them effectively.

Level 4    The couple is almost always aware of the differences between stimuli in their world, and they respond to them in a differential manner. They actively attempt to become more aware of the various emotions and their sources.

Example:    The couple may show a strong desire to understand themselves as a unique and complex couple and they attempt to differentiate and identify the distinct people and events in their world.

In Summary:    The couple is actively involved in a successive differentiation of their feelings and the events in their world.

Level 5    The couple always perceives the different stimuli in their world and reacts to them in a variety of differential ways. They are fully aware of their own unique effect on the discrete stimuli around them.

Example:    The couple may clearly differentiate among their characteristics and those of others. They show immediate awareness of their own unique characteristics, and the reactions they stimulate in others.

In Summary:    The couple recognizes individuality in themselves and in others, and responds in an appropriate manner.

## APPENDIX C

### INTERNALIZATION/EXTERNALIZATION IN INTERPERSONAL PROCESSES: A SCALE FOR MEASUREMENT

Level 1    The couple deals with their relationship problems as if they were entirely external to them and beyond their control, even where it is clearly appropriate for them to examine their own behavior and reactions.

Example:    The couple may simply describe other people and situations without ever recognizing their own responsibilities or reactions.

In Summary: It is as if the couple were not aware that they contribute in any way to their own difficulties. They seem to be saying: if only the situation was different we would be all right.

Level 2    The couple deals with their relationship and any problems by only discussing their external manifestations.

Example:    The couple discusses the external manifestations of their problems in a highly intellectualized explanatory way.

In Summary: The couple uses explanatory generalities rather than deal with their internal problems and feelings.

Level 3    The couple facilitates between dealing with their internal feelings and their appropriate responsibility in their problems and discussing externals.

Example:    The couple may give way to feelings of the moment but tends to discuss them in terms of external cause rather than identify them as their response to such and such.

In Summary: The couple occasionally shows definite signs of seeing their contributions and expressing their reactions but this is intermingled with externalizing behavior.



Level 4    The couple shows a definite and continuous drive to discover their own contributions and their own internal reactions.

Example: While the couple perceives difficulties and drives to understand their own reactions and contributions they are not always clear about what they are or what the source of the difficulty is.

In Summary: While the couple continually seeks to grasp their internal feelings and their source they are often unsure of the feelings going on inside them and their source.

Level 5    The couple immediately deals with their feelings, behavior and thoughts and are able to localize rather specific sources.

Example: The couple seems to be saying: These are responses to such and such, how can we change them so that we can resolve or diminish our difficulties?

In Summary: The couple is appropriately internally focused with a strong drive and is able to discuss specifically their thoughts, feelings and actions.

#### APPENDIX D

OWNING OF FEELINGS IN INTERPERSONAL PROCESSES:  
A SCALE FOR MEASUREMENT

Level 1    The couple avoids accepting any of their feelings. When feelings are expressed, they are always seen as belonging to others, or entirely situational and outside of themselves.

Example:    The couple avoids identifying or admitting any feelings by either remaining silent or denying that they feel anything at all.

In Summary:    The couple seems to believe they are not a part of the world of feelings.

Level 2    The couple may express feelings vaguely, but they are not really accepted as coming from within. Feelings are not tied to specific interactions but seem to pervade life. In general they show little involvement with their feelings.

Example:    The couple discusses or intellectualizes about feelings in a detached, abstract manner and gives little evidence of knowing the origin of the feelings.

In Summary:    Any expression of feeling appears intellectualized, vague, and distant.

Level 3    The couple can usually identify their specific feelings and their source but tends to express what they feel in an intellectualized manner.

Example:    The couple seems to have an intellectual grasp of their feelings and their origin but has little emotional proximity to them.

In Summary:    The couple usually ties down and owns their feelings, but in an intellectual manner.

Level 4    The couple almost always acknowledges their feelings and can express them with emotional proximity but at times has difficulty in connecting the feelings and their sources.

Example:    The couple shows immediate and free access to their feelings but has some difficulty in understanding these feelings or their connection to people or concerns in their life.

In Summary:    The couple owns their feelings fully but seem to have some difficulty in linking them to specific things in their life.

Level 5    The couple clearly embraces their feelings with emotional proximity, and at the same time shows awareness that the feelings are tied to specific behavior of their own and others.

Example:    The couple is completely in tune with their feelings, expresses them in a genuine way, and are able to identify their origin.

In Summary:    The couple clearly owns their feelings and accurately specifies their source.

APPENDIX E

MARITAL INTERACTION CHECKLIST

Please read each question below and answer it to the best of your ability. In some cases the exact answer that you would like may not be listed. If this should be the case, please try to pick the answer that comes the closest to describing your marriage. Some of the questions will require written answers. Please feel free to use as much space as you need. If the space provided is not large enough, you may continue on the back of the page.

1. When were you married?
2. How long did you and your spouse live in your first home?
3. How many times have you and your spouse moved since then?
4. How many jobs (with different employers) have you held since you were married?
5. How many jobs (with different employers) has your spouse held since you were married?
6. Listed below are 10 areas of concern for most married couples. Please rank order this list as to how important each area is to you in your marriage. The most important area would receive a rank of 1 and the least important area a rank of 10.

\_\_\_\_\_ financial concerns

\_\_\_\_\_ child rearing

\_\_\_\_\_ equality with spouse

\_\_\_\_\_ other's impressions of spouse

\_\_\_\_\_ household responsibilities

\_\_\_\_\_ decision making

- \_\_\_\_\_ use of free time
  - \_\_\_\_\_ sexual concerns
  - \_\_\_\_\_ expressions of intimacy
  - \_\_\_\_\_ outside pressure (i.e., work, debts, school, etc.)
7. Because of the importance (or lack of it) many of the above areas have in a marriage, they are also areas of potential difficulty. Please rank order the same areas as to the amount of difficulty you and your spouse experience in each area.
- \_\_\_\_\_ financial concerns
  - \_\_\_\_\_ decision making
  - \_\_\_\_\_ child rearing
  - \_\_\_\_\_ equality with spouse
  - \_\_\_\_\_ other's impressions of spouse
  - \_\_\_\_\_ household responsibilities
  - \_\_\_\_\_ use of free time
  - \_\_\_\_\_ sexual concerns
  - \_\_\_\_\_ expressions of intimacy
  - \_\_\_\_\_ outside pressure (i.e., work, debts, school, etc.)
8. What can your spouse do that will make you the happiest?

9. How often does this usually occur? (Check one)

☐ more than once a day  
☐ once a day  
☐ once every few days  
☐ once a week  
☐ twice a week  
☐ 3 times a week  
☐ once a month  
☐ less than once a month

10. What can you do that will make your spouse the happiest?

11. How often does this usually occur? (Check one)

☐ more than once a day  
☐ once a day  
☐ once every few days  
☐ once a week  
☐ twice a week  
☐ 3 times a week  
☐ once a month  
☐ less than once a month

12. How can you tell that your spouse is angry? How do they communicate this to you?



13. How can your spouse tell that you are angry? How do you communicate this to them?
14. What has been the most powerful experience you and your spouse have shared together in the last 5 years. Where did it take place, what did it concern, etc.
15. Has your marriage lived up to your pre-marriage expectations? (yes or no) \_\_\_\_\_. Please discuss this below.
16. How have you changed since you were married? Would these changes have taken place if you had not gotten married?
17. How has your spouse changed since you were married? Do you think these changes would have come about if you had not been married?
18. How often do you and your spouse have a serious conversation dealing with your marriage? (Check one)
- \_\_\_\_\_ once a day
- \_\_\_\_\_ three times a week
- \_\_\_\_\_ once a week
- \_\_\_\_\_ once every 2 weeks
- \_\_\_\_\_ once every month

- \_\_\_\_\_ once every 2 months
- \_\_\_\_\_ less than once every 2 months

19. What is one of the most important things you and your spouse have talked about in the last 6 months?

20. What do you seem to argue about the most?

21. How often do you have this type of argument?

- \_\_\_\_\_ once a day
- \_\_\_\_\_ three times a week
- \_\_\_\_\_ once a week
- \_\_\_\_\_ once every 2 weeks
- \_\_\_\_\_ once every month
- \_\_\_\_\_ once every 2 months
- \_\_\_\_\_ less than once every 2 months

22. When do these arguments usually take place?

- \_\_\_\_\_ weekends
- \_\_\_\_\_ weekdays

23. At what time do they usually begin?

- \_\_\_\_\_ morning
- \_\_\_\_\_ afternoon
- \_\_\_\_\_ evening
- \_\_\_\_\_ night

24. Where do these arguments usually begin?

- ☐ kitchen
- ☐ bathroom
- ☐ dining room
- ☐ equal
- ☐ living room
- ☐ bedroom
- ☐ out of home

25. How long does the effect of this type of argument usually last?

- ☐ couple of minutes
- ☐ 15 minutes
- ☐ 30 minutes
- ☐ one hour
- ☐ three hours
- ☐ most of the day
- ☐ several days
- ☐ a week or more

26. What does your marriage mean to you at this point?

Please read each statement below and decide to what extent it applies to you and your marriage. Use the following scale to record your decision.

USUALLYSOMETIMESSELDOMNEVER

4

3

2

1

A statement that you felt was sometimes true in your marriage would be given a rating of 3, etc.

27. Does your spouse have a tendency to say things which would be better left unsaid? \_\_\_\_\_
28. Does your spouse seem to understand your feelings? \_\_\_\_\_
29. Does your spouse listen to what you have to say? \_\_\_\_\_
30. Is it hard to understand your spouse's feelings and attitudes? \_\_\_\_\_
31. Does your spouse let you finish talking before responding to what you are saying? \_\_\_\_\_
32. Does your spouse complain that you do not understand him/her? \_\_\_\_\_
33. Do you feel that your spouse says one thing but really means something else? \_\_\_\_\_
34. When a problem comes up that needs to be solved, are you and your spouse able to discuss it together in a clam manner? \_\_\_\_\_
35. Is it easier to confide in a friend rather than in your spouse? \_\_\_\_\_
36. Does your spouse confide in others rather than in you? \_\_\_\_\_
37. Do you feel that in most matters your spouse understands what you are trying to say? \_\_\_\_\_
38. Can your spouse tell what kind of a day you have had without asking? \_\_\_\_\_

39. Do you and your spouse talk over pleasant things that have happened during the day? \_\_\_\_\_
40. Do you pretend you are listening to your spouse when you are really not? \_\_\_\_\_
41. How satisfied are you with your marriage? (Circle one)

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

Not

Extremely

at

all

APPENDIX F

TOPIC CONGRUITY AND DISCUSSIBILITY  
RATING FORMS

Listed below are 11 potential discussion topics. I would like you to spend some time thinking about each topic and how it would apply to your relationship with your spouse. Then decide how much you would like to discuss each topic with your spouse today. After you have reached this decision, please rank order the topics according to how much you would like to discuss them with your spouse at this time. The topic you would most like to discuss would be given a rank of 1 and the topic you would least like to discuss would be given a rank of 11.

---

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Topic</u>
_____	1. How you as an individual have changed since your marriage.
_____	2. The effect of having certain "touchy" areas that are difficult to discuss with your spouse (here I am interested in the effect that such areas have and not in what those particular areas are).
_____	3. The manner in which household duties are divided between you and your spouse.
_____	4. The attributes and behaviors of your spouse that you appreciate and find particularly enjoyable.
_____	5. The effect that financial concerns have upon your marriage and your relationship with your spouse.
_____	6. The various ways in which you and your spouse express caring and intimacy toward each other.

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Topic</u>
_____	7. The effect that outside pressures have upon your marriage, (i.e., pressures such as job, relatives, in-laws, etc.).
_____	8. The various things you do to communicate to your spouse that you are feeling happy and "on top of the world."
_____	9. What your marriage means to you.
_____	10. The effect that a rather strong disagreement has upon your relationship (over the next few days).
_____	11. The most positive thing you and your spouse have done together in the last 3 months.



You have now indicated the order in which you might like to discuss these 11 topics with your spouse. I would like to get some idea as to how easy or difficult you would personally find each discussion to be. Once again I would like you to think about each topic and imagine what it would be like to discuss it with your spouse. Please try to get in touch with your thoughts and feelings about each topic. After you have done this please indicate below how easy or difficult you feel each discussion might be. In order to make this rating please use the following scale:

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

extremely  
easy to  
discuss

extremely  
hard to  
discuss

Thus, a topic that would be extremely hard to discuss would be given a rating of 7 and a topic that would be extremely easy to discuss would be given a rating of 1. Topics which fell between these extremes would be given intermediate ratings (i.e., a topic that was somewhat easy to discuss might be given a rating of 3).

---

<u>Rating</u>	<u>Topic</u>
_____	individual changes
_____	"touchy" areas
_____	meaning of marriage
_____	enjoyable behavior
_____	financial concerns
_____	communicating happiness
_____	expressing intimacy
_____	outside pressures

<u>Rating</u>	<u>Topic</u>
_____	household duties
_____	effects of disagreements
_____	positive thing

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

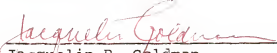
Robert Perry O'Brien was born in East Orange, New Jersey on June 4, 1949. He is the son of George P. and Doris M. O'Brien. After successfully completing his high school education at Central High School, Phoenix, Arizona, he entered Trinity University and was graduated with the Bachelor of Arts degree in May, 1971. He entered Trinity University Graduate School in September, 1971 with a major in clinical psychology, offered jointly by Trinity University and the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio. He was awarded the Master of Arts degree in May, 1973. He entered the Graduate School of the University of Florida in September, 1973, and was awarded the Doctor of Philosophy in June, 1976. His permanent address is 204 West Nichols, San Manuel, Arizona.



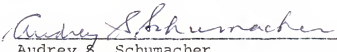
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Harry A. Grater, Chairman  
Professor of Psychology


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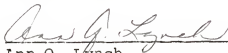
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This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Department of Psychology in the College of Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate Council, and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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